

4-18-95

US EPA RECORDS CENTER REGION 5



451210

Dan Sparks
USFWS phone 812-334-4261
Bloomington Field Office
620 S. Walker St.
Bloomington, IN 47403-2121

also sent map & letter
to Helly Grejda

~~IDEM~~

100 N Senate Ave

IGCN 1255

Indianapolis, IN 46204

phone 317-233-0691

Dear Dan:

I am writing regarding the American Chemical Services Superfund Site in Griffith, Lake County, Indiana. I have heard from the Chicago EPA office that now is a good time to think about what might be done to compensate for natural resource damages there.

I called yesterday and found out you will be gone all week, so I am writing a letter and sending a map of areas near American Chemical Services which would be good to purchase. These properties are all dune and swale, more or less; but since they are so far from Lake Michigan, the swells and swales are gentle. Nevertheless, they contain a great deal of wetland. I would be willing to do a botanical survey of the properties (for free, even) if it would help them be preserved as part of the settlement. I can do the Swink and Wilhelm floristic quality index for you (and am quite qualified to do it according to G. Wilhelm's recent newspaper quote over the Oak Ridge Prairie vs Lake County Parks battle).

Indiana DNR Division of Nature Preserves/Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore owns land nearby (Hoosier Prairie and its additions). Lake County Parks and Recreation owns Oak Ridge Prairie County Park across the street from American Chemical Services. There is a choice of governmental agencies, then, to manage the land.

Let me know if you need more detailed information or want to look at the properties.

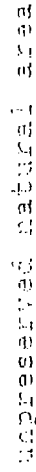
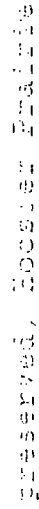
Sincerely,

Sandy O'Brien

Sandy O'Brien
5500 S. Liverpool Rd.
Hobart, IN 46342
phone 219-942-2956

Hello Jim! It was nice
meeting & talking with you out
by Clark & Pine last Sat.
Here is the map & letter I
already had sent out.

Sandy

[illegible]

A hand-drawn map of the Indianapolis area, showing streets, parks, and landmarks. The map is oriented with Kennedy Ave at the top and Colfax St at the bottom. Main St runs vertically through the center. A dashed line representing a 'future rail to trail' runs diagonally from the top left to the bottom right. Key features include:

- Streets:** Kennedy Ave, Colfax St, Broad St, Main St, Cline Ave, Ave H, and Reder Rd.
- Parks and Landmarks:** Hoosier Prairie, State Nature Preserve, Griffith Savanna Wetland, and Oak Ridge Prairie.
- Other Features:** GrandTrunk RR, ACS, CSX property, LaSalle Steel, and Erie Lackawanna abandoned RR.
- Shaded Areas:** Various areas are shaded with different patterns, including a large area in the center labeled 'Hart' and 'Arco', and a smaller area labeled 'Griffith Savanna Wetland'.
- Notes:** A note near the Griffith Savanna Wetland mentions 'has a 1300 sq ft building in some of its upland'.

Dear Friend of Oak Ridge Prairie County Park,

2-9-95

Unfortunately well-loved natural area and habitat for rare bird, reptile and amphibian species at Oak Ridge Prairie will be obliterated by more parking lots, roads, and picnic grounds unless the Lake County Park and Recreation Board (LCPRB) can be convinced to change its mind. *Please send a letter as soon as possible with your support for scaling back development at Oak Ridge Prairie and moving it to more acceptable places. Write to: Christopher Morrow, Board President, Lake County Park and Recreation Dept., 2293 N. Main St., Crown Point, IN 46307 and send a copy of this to Bob Nickovich, Superintendent, LCPRD, same address.

The best dune habitat at Whihala County Park, a natural heritage site that was home to Dunes goldenrod and sea rocket and Franklin's ground squirrel (all 3 listed as threatened by Indiana DNR) was just bulldozed two weeks ago for parking lots, though officials from DNR and the Nature Conservancy were told this area would only have a narrow road going thru. We sure don't want this devastation to happen to Oak Ridge Prairie too! It has too many rare wildlife species and irreplaceable natural area. Particular objections to Oak Ridge Prairie's development plans are:

Pond "I" for snowmaking, new road & RR crossing "J", and picnic area "M" with 60 car parking lot, 2 picnic shelters, waterless toilet: This once-farmed 10 acres south of the sledding hill has recovered enough to be considered a low quality natural area, rating 36 in native plant quality or FQI, (unusual for farmland, but possible because much is wetland and wetlands do recover better). Henslow's sparrows (listed as threatened by DNR) have been reported to nest here and western smooth green snakes (listed as threatened by DNR) live here.

Picnic area "L" with access road, 120 car parking lot, 4 picnic shelters, waterless toilet: This will impact about 5.5 acres out of a mostly never-plowed 24 acre oak savanna and wetland natural area of medium quality. It has a native plant quality rating (FQI) of 52, much much better than humans can create. Scarlet tanagers, a species of some concern, nested here last year and sedge wrens (listed as threatened by DNR) were heard here too. The threatened western smooth green snakes are probably here too.

Picnic area "N" with 30 car parking lot, 1 picnic shelter, waterless toilet: This is in the corner of Oak Ridge Prairie's most pristine natural area of oak savanna, wet prairie and sedge meadow with wildflowers such as grass pink orchids, sundrops, and yellow star grass. This area, labeled "Remnant Prairie" on the map, is a natural heritage inventory site and should be a dedicated State Nature Preserve. About 20 to 25 acres of this natural area have already been irretrievably lost for the excavated Fishing Pond.

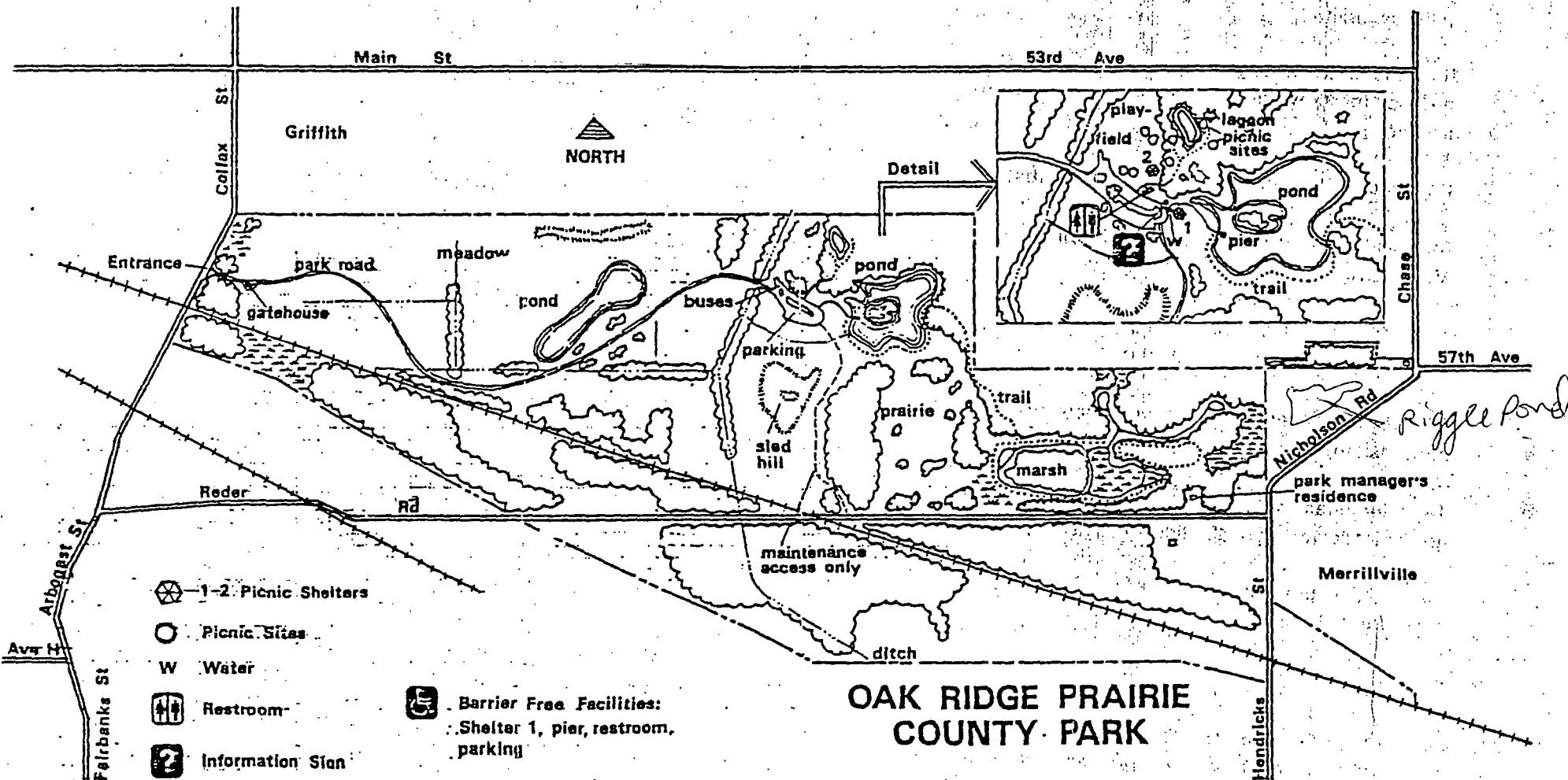
*Put in your letter that you want it to be read into the minutes at the next Park Board meeting. (or it may be thrown away)

Prairie observation deck "P" is in the heart of the sedge wren nesting area in sedge meadow (a wetland habitat) in the above high quality "Remnant Prairie" natural area. Sedge wrens are listed by DNR as threatened.

Wetland Mitigation Plan: This entails disturbing about 46 acres of land north of the entrance road in the vicinity of the wildlife pond. It was planted in prairie, but has 86 native plant species, many more than were planted. (1) Although the intent of providing duck habitat is honorable, the project as planned will end up overrun by the invasive non-native purple loosestrife and Phragmites (common or giant reed grass) which is very poor habitat for all creatures. (2) Much of this area is already wetland, probably due to the northern berm of pond excavation and airport ditch spoil blocking drainage. (3) This land was mostly all farmed, but has recovered amazingly well to a lower quality natural area with a native plant quality (FQI) of 44. This is already of much higher quality than the very best wetland restoration projects which have not surpassed a rating of 35! (4) A zig-zag channel is proposed to go thru some nice sedge meadow wetland and will connect the wildlife pond to the airport ditch which has questionable water quality due to airport runoff (deicer, gas, oil, rubber). (5) Sedge wrens (threatened) were recorded calling where the east berm would be constructed. The northern leopard frogs (listed as special concern by DNR) also frequent the existing habitat. (6) The planned "moist soil management" technique for the wetland mitigation area must be dropped because it brings disaster to native habitat. (7) Much better for wildlife habitat would be a plan to carefully control the existing purple loosestrife and Phragmites before it's too late and restrict the earthmoving to minor work within the ditches for water-control structures.

New canoe launch channel and ramp "T" and waterless toilet along with parking lot "Z" for 15 cars and 5 cars with trailers: This will open up Riggle Pond to boat traffic and fishing. A Land and Water Conservation Fund matching grant will fund this opening up of excellent wildlife habitat. The blue-spotted salamander (listed as special concern by DNR) is common here. This will also bring a new park entrance on the east side of Oak Ridge Prairie which could lead to further development of 150 acres of wetland and oak savanna habitat now undisturbed by human use. Since no entrance fee or fishing fee will be charged, it is not a revenue-making project anyway and the pond will soon be fished out. Also a private pay-fish lake is being made nearby to take care of fishing needs.

This situation is serious and warrants your attention. You also might want to write a letter to the editor of your newspaper or attend a LCPRB meeting. The Park Board meetings are always at 7 p.m. and are usually on the second Thursday of each month in the Commissioner's meeting room of the Lake Co. Government Center at 2293 N. Main St. in Crown Point. Call 755-3696 to make sure of the date and place. I strongly urge you to attend a Park Board meeting. There is one is Thurs. June 8, 1995. Thank you!



OAK RIDGE PRAIRIE COUNTY PARK